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Executive Registry

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1 October 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence
Deputy Director for Plans
Deputy Director for Science and Technology
✓ Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Completion of the Catching Up Phase and
Start of the Ongoing Phase of the CIA
Historical Program

1. The Agency deadline for the completion of the catching up phase of the CIA Historical Program, 31 December 1971, is almost at hand. I have just reviewed the program to see where we are at present and what the prospects are for completing it by the end of December. From my review it is apparent that we are progressing neither as rapidly as I had hoped nor as rapidly as necessary to complete the catching up within the time set. Nevertheless, I feel that if we make a determined effort in the next three months, we can substantially complete the program in three of the directorates and make a good showing in the fourth.

2. To achieve this objective in the little time remaining may I request that you have your people activate projects that are still dormant, get on with their research and writing, bring their unfinished drafts to completion and review and revise them, and proceed with dispatch to the final typing of approved drafts. I ask for a concerted attack all along the line, at all stages of the production of histories, to bring the completion of the catching up phase as near realization as possible.

3. The present phase of the CIA Historical Program will be followed next January by the ongoing program. Planning for this program has already begun. Chairmen and members of historical boards, historical officers of the directorates and their components, and members

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of the CIA Historical Staff have been asked for suggestions on the nature and content of the program and on specific projects. The program will then be assembled by the Historical Staff. Directorate programs will be approved by the chairman and members of the historical board of each directorate and by the Chief, CIA Historical Staff. Approval of the program as a whole will be given by the Executive Director-Comptroller.

4. The ongoing program will be smaller and more selective than the current one, with histories assigned for completion on a priority basis, by fiscal years, beginning with FY 1972. Writers are to be designated who are qualified to produce good histories within a reasonable time. Insofar as possible, they are to be on a full-time basis with the program while working on a history. As in the catching up phase, writers are to be under the guidance and direction of the Historical Staff for their research and writing. Much closer rapport is planned to complete better histories in less time.

5. It is realized that it is not easy to plan and carry out a continuing program with the cuts in personnel now in effect and those to come. Experience has shown that a smaller number of Agency personnel who are carefully selected and permitted to devote their entire time to research and writing can do the job more effectively than a larger number, many of whom are not interested and have been assigned to write a history in addition to their regular duties. In selecting writers, consideration might well be given to younger but experienced Agency people. When more senior personnel are selected, they should be assigned to projects which they can complete before retirement. Independent contractors should be considered only when there is no other alternative.

6. In planning your part of the program, I would like you to emphasize that the overall and component histories should be purposeful and focus on significant subjects and problems. The goals should be to establish, consolidate, and evaluate the record in such a way as to contribute to the effective management and operation of the Agency. It is important that proposals be reviewed to insure that resources allocated to the program are devoted to the production of histories that have high utility.

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7. All of the individual histories of the ongoing program are not intended to be completed at the same time, but should be spaced according to need, urgency, and availability of personnel. In assigning priorities, consideration should be given to the desirability of undertaking and completing histories on new subjects before updating histories which have only recently been finished. Any project in the catching up period which has not been completed by the end of 1971 should be re-examined to determine whether it should be finished in the immediately ongoing period, deferred to a later time, or removed from the program. The ongoing program may also be used to fill important gaps in the earlier history of the Agency. In your planning indicate what you believe should be done in the next five years (through FY 1976) and show more specifically what you propose to do for the balance of FY 1972 and FY 1973. Your strong support is requested for completing the catching up phase and for the planning and initiation of the ongoing program.

L. K. White

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Executive Director-Comptroller

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